

Yesterday I voted in favor of the [Employee Free Choice Act](#) (EFCA). This bipartisan bill would bring forth long overdue changes to the broken [National Labor Relations Board](#) (NLRB) system. President Bush has been rolling back worker protections over the last few years, and I was happy to support this bill to give power back to the middle class.

Allowing American workers to organize without fear of reprisals

As the Education and Workforce Committee recently [reported](#) ,

Over the past five years, President Bush has stacked the National Labor Relations Board with anti-union members – and American workers are paying the price. Millions of workers have seen their right to organize eliminated or severely restricted, their basic human rights have been trampled, and businesses have essentially been given free rein to make it as difficult as possible for their employees to organize.

Our nation is stronger when workers join together and bargain for a better life. Union membership helps to offset some of the race and gender disparities in the labor market. Activism by organized labor has given Americans better wages, paid sick leave, child labor laws, paid vacations, stronger work safety regulations, and more secure retirement. Union workers receive better benefits and higher weekly earnings than their non-union counterparts. Furthermore, workplaces unionized through majority sign-up have better employee relations and greater employee focus on the business.

Responsible employers voluntarily recognize unions when a majority of workers signal their desire to unionize. Studies have shown that workers believe the sign-up method to be a fair process, free of the pressures and coercion stemming from NLRB elections. Along with native born and other immigrant groups, Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities share the strong work ethic and desire for advancement at the core of the American Dream. Labor membership is a key component to a fair and open competition for jobs.

Unfortunately, every year, over 20,000 U.S. workers are illegally fired, demoted, laid off, suspended without pay, or denied work by their employers as a result of union activity. According to Human Rights Watch, "Legal obstacles tilt the playing field so steeply against freedom of association that the United States is in violation of international human rights standards for workers." It's past time to restore workers with the ability to organize without fear of reprisals.

The Employee Free Choice Act would:

- Add the option of majority sign-up for forming unions and bargaining
- Provide an efficient timeline for good faith mediation and arbitration
- Add stronger penalties for violations during the organizing and initial contract negotiations
- Ultimately, EFCA would restore workers' freedom to form unions and bargain

I am pleased to report that the bill passed the House of Representatives [241-185](#) . It is now up to my colleagues in the Senate to help pass this legislation in support of employee rights.